

Benchmark Committee

Meeting Summary

October 14, 1999

Adopted (11/29/99)

Committee members present: Chair Bob Helsell, Greg Devereux, Commissioner Judie Stanton, Representative Karen Schmidt, Steve Viney (representing Councilmember Richard McIver)

Committee members not present: John Kelly, John Rindlaub

The Benchmark Committee convened at 3:30 pm at the SeaTac Marriott Hotel. Chairman Bob Helsell welcomed members to the first meeting of the new Committee. He asked members to introduce themselves and also welcomed the members of Committee's technical advisory group, Charlie Howard from the state Department of Transportation, Chris Mudgett from the County Road Administration Board, and Diane Carlson from the Association of Washington Cities. He also introduced Kathy Elias, the Committee's staff person.

Discussion of Committee Purpose

Kathy handed out a copy of a proposed Committee charter. A timeline of 6 months was proposed, which would lead to completion of a set of recommended benchmarks to the full Commission by April or May 2000. The recommendations would be presented at the same time as the full set of options from the three committees. Committee members agreed with the charter and timeline.

Discussion of Benchmark Approach

Chairman Helsell asked for discussion of a number of key questions: What should the purpose of the benchmarks be? What topics should they cover? What is the appropriate level of detail? Members also added the question: Who is the audience for the benchmarks?

Discussion ensued in which members agreed the purpose should be to communicate to the public and to the Legislature about the transportation system as a whole. Benchmarks should be about the macro level, not about individual jurisdictions. They should tell a story about the aggregate system progress toward twenty-year goals. While performance measures could also be used as management tools to allocate resources and hold agencies accountable for delivery of certain outcomes, that was more the Transportation Commission's and individual agencies' responsibility, not the Blue Ribbon

Commission's. However, to be credible the Committee needs to develop benchmarks that will define the outcomes of the BRCT's effort. This effort should be geared toward communication with the broadest possible audiences.

It was noted that only with specific outcomes would the BRCT be able to justify any potential funding requests. It was also stated that with specific outcomes the Legislature might consider benchmarks a useful tool over time and would be more inclined to support tracking data as an ongoing effort. Members also noted that the outcomes or targets would help define the threshold of acceptability, or the trade-off between adequacy of the system and willingness to pay.

Members proceeded to discuss individual benchmarks and their related data issues. Technical advisors described existing data collection efforts such as the legislatively mandated performance-based budgeting initiative, state and federal data collection in the areas of road and bridge condition, safety and air quality; and the LEAP pilot projects on local government data. Each of these data sources had some limitations and new tracking efforts might need to be developed.

Members agreed to take up one or two benchmarks at each future meeting and consider them in-depth based on what data are available for each topic. Specialists would be invited to address the Committee on each area, as appropriate. It was agreed to take up the air quality benchmark and the physical condition benchmark at the next meeting.

Meeting Dates

Members agreed tentatively to schedule regular meetings from noon to 2:00 pm on the third Friday of each month, immediately after the Administration Committee meetings.

Since the Administration Committee is not meeting in December, a date of December 17, 9:00 am to noon was set.

The Committee adjourned at 5:10 pm.